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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #F-1

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
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Attention: Management Training Branch

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Subject: Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (A.C.E.) Listing Observation
Report--Spartanburg, SC and Charlotte, NC

I. INTRODUCTION

A basic operation in the Census 2000 Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (A.C.E.) is the address listing of all of the housing units that are members of the block clusters that were selected to be included in the sample. This operation is done independently of the census address listing. The information required to verify the addresses is generally obtained through an interview with a household member or by a proxy interview with a neighbor, but can also be obtained by observation. The listing was scheduled to be done in three waves, the first beginning in September 1999, and the last running through early December 1999. I observed A.C.E. listing in wave 3.

II. OBSERVATION

My observation visit took place in Spartanburg, South Carolina and Charlotte, North Carolina on November 9 and 10, 1999. Spartanburg is in the area covered by the Charlotte Regional Census Center. I spent the first day in Spartanburg and the second in Charlotte, with a lister in both locations.

The listing operation in Spartanburg was proceeding very smoothly, and in fact was essentially finished as of the day on which I was set to observe. According to the crew leader, they were running two weeks ahead of the scheduled completion date. He said that one reason they were so far ahead was that they had been able to hire people to do the listing who were familiar with their assigned areas, and were often, to some degree, acquainted with the people they needed to interview. They were, consequently, more able to catch residents at home to conduct the interviews than might have been expected. The lister with whom I went out to observe was one such person. He lived very close to the area within which he had done much of his address listing, and the work had evidently unfolded with few problems. On the day I visited, he had only a few call-backs left to do to finish all of his assigned clusters, and so we went to the corresponding locations for those. As it turned out, at all but one of them, nobody was home and he could not obtain a proxy interview. At one location, the lister tried to obtain a proxy interview from someone who was walking along the street, but the person did not know anything about the residence. The location at which an interview was conducted presented a situation that called for the lister's judgement. The address was for a detached house and represented one housing unit. Behind the house and to the side of it there was a fairly substantial structure that may have been a converted garage. According to the woman he interviewed, the building was being used as a storage shed for the family's furniture and could not be used as a residence. However, in the lister's opinion, the building was habitable, and he decided to include it as an additional housing unit at the address.

The lister took some time to show me clusters for which he already completed the listings. He described the process of completing the listing for a cluster, and mentioned how much faster he had become at finishing them as he gained experience. His assigned clusters were almost entirely residential, but there were a few commercial structures located within them. He said he had gone into those establishments to determine if they contained any housing units; none of them had. He came across as someone who was concerned about doing the work correctly, and was courteous towards the people with whom he spoke.

A discussion with the crew leader indicated that there was just not enough work left to be done in Spartanburg to justify spending another day there to observe. He said that the listing operation was going well in the Charlotte area too, but was not as much ahead of schedule as in Spartanburg, so that there was more address listing left to be done. I spoke to an official at the Charlotte office about the situation, and he arranged to have me observe on the following day with someone there. Accordingly, the next morning I followed the crew leader on the hour's drive from Spartanburg to the RCC in Charlotte (he needed to go there anyway).

I spent the day observing both urban and rural listing. The urban listing was done first, and involved going to a subdivision of large detached houses. Since it was midmorning on a weekday, it is not surprising that there was nobody home at many of the residences. At those houses where no one came to the door, the lister left a Census Bureau notice, which contained a phone number that people could use to call and provide the information. She said that some people did call, though it was certainly not something that could be relied upon. For some of the

other houses, she was able to obtain the needed information through a proxy interview with a neighbor. At the houses where interviews were conducted, people were not reluctant to provide their name and phone number; no one refused to answer. Towards the end of the cluster, we had a case where a respondent came to the door, but before the lister had a chance to ask a question, conveyed a desire not to speak to us, and slammed the door. Apart from that single incident, however, people were polite and cooperative. One small problem was that she had apparently put the map spot numbers for the addresses on the A.C.E. map before doing the listing, and in some instances those placements did not correspond very well with the actual locations of the houses; she had to erase the numbers and put them on the map in the correct locations. She said this happened fairly often. There were no commercial buildings in the cluster. She was able to obtain listing information for about half of the addresses in it. Proxy interviews with neighbors proved to be quite helpful in obtaining the information.

Next we went to the rural block cluster. This did not appear very different from the urban cluster we had just visited, except that the residences within it were more widely separated. Listing in this cluster proceeded in a manner similar to the previous one. There were a number of locations at which nobody was home, and she was able to conduct proxy interviews for some of them with neighbors. Again, some of the map spots turned out to be inaccurate. One location contained a house, behind which there was a smaller building of indeterminate type; it was possibly commercial, and possibly contained a housing unit. Nobody was home at the house, and she was not able to conduct a proxy interview with a neighbor about it. She said she would make a call-back later.

Listing for the two clusters seemed fairly successful, especially given the day and time of day on which the listing was done. She was left with some call-backs to do, but indicated that overall she was nearly finished with the work she had been assigned. In conducting the interviews, the lister was friendly, and was conscientious about asking for the person's name and phone number, verifying the address, and asking how many housing units were located at the address. Like the lister the day before, it appeared she was being careful to do the work properly.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

My observation confirmed that the most productive times to do the listing are in the evenings and on weekends, rather than during the day on weekdays. The lister on the first day mentioned that his listing efforts were most effective at those times, and on the next day it is reasonable to assume that more interviews would have been conducted if it had been a weekend day. The lister's availability must be taken into consideration, of course, but to the extent possible it would be better to schedule the work for those times, when people are more likely to be home.

Based on my experience in Spartanburg, it was a good idea to hire people to do the address listing who were familiar with the block clusters they were assigned. It seemed to be quite helpful with respect to obtaining interviews and otherwise gathering the listing information.

The address listing operation in Charlotte and Spartanburg was going well. There did not appear to be any significant problems, and it was on schedule, or ahead of schedule, to be finished by the deadline.

cc:

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